NEW THEATRE MAGAZINE

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Interview with Harold Pinter

Stratford and the Aldwych

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Barriers to Expansion

THE EDITORS

AN OUTSIDER can hardly be blamed if he finds it impossible to decide whether the English theatre is flourishing or in a state of rapid decay; the evidence is everywhere conflicting. What one critic will welcome with enthusiasm, another will gloomily condemn as a further nail in the coffin of British drama. One town blames the competition of TV for the failure of its professional theatre, while the theatre in another town of the same size accepts a donation from an Independent Television company and presents an ambitious programme to crowded houses. A new play closes in London after less than a month, and yet packs a provincial Repertory for the whole of its fortnightly or three-weekly run. In the Universities, not a few academics brand the modern theatre as a waste of time and not worth serious study, while in Manchester, Granada TV endows a department of drama which is to include a diploma course devoted to the practical aspects of contemporary theatre and television. The National Theatre is again a public issue; but at the moment who can predict whether it will be built and opened within four years in time for the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's birth, or be shifted from one site to another for a further fifty years, and still be the centre of controversy on the 400th anniversary of his death ?

Are the optimists, talking of expansion and new theatres being built, merely dreamers, or do they in fact see further than the people who dismiss the theatre as a minority interest of decreasing appeal ? The puzzled outsider would do well to study *The Priorities of Patronage,* the Arts Council's latest Annual Report, which makes it plain that an imaginative Repertory Theatre can earn an average of 80 per cent. of its running costs; for the remaining 20 per cent. it must be dependent upon subsidy from the Arts Council, Local Authorities and other funds. Working with a limited budget which must cover music and the visual arts as well as the theatre, the Arts Council is already fully committed, while the policy of the Gulbenkian Foundation is to make a donation towards a new project, or the extension of an existing one, rather than cover a theatre's losses indefinitely.

The barrier to expansion, as the Arts Council Reports clearly emphasises, lies in the failure of so many Local Authorities to use the opportunity given them under the Local Government Act of 1948, to subsidise the theatre in the Provinces. Even where building a new theatre is involved, this is *not* an intolerable financial burden : in under 40 years the Corporation of Coventry will have recouped the whole cost of building the Belgrade Theatre; meanwhile, the theatre's revenue amounts to well over 80 per cent. of its operating cost, and the margin is covered by a grant from the Arts Council and a subsidy from the Corporation amounting to a levy of ¼d. per head.

But statistics tell only half the story; what makes the theatre worth bothering about in 1961 is the fact that there is a growing feeling among intellectuals, whatever their beliefs, that many of today's problems can best be explored upon the stage; and there is every sign that audiences are prepared to respond with enthusiasm to this approach. If the reception of new plays in London is often fitful and capricious, the Repertory system in the provinces, where every play is part of a wider programme, exists to ensure that at least in some cities new dramatists will get a balanced hearing; more than one writer has reason to be grateful for this. The National Theatre comes into prominence at a time when it

has become impossible to separate the English theatre into two neat categories—The City and its well-meaning but less talented country cousin The Provinces. By becoming the focal point of the theatre outside as well as inside London, the National Theatre could become, as the Arts Council Report suggests, the centre of a network of companies based on provincial centres; at the moment, much of the work being done in the provinces hardly achieves the recognition it deserves.

If there is little cause for gloom in 1961, there is even less for complacency. The theatre today cannot exist without support and subsidy, and if it is to play the vital part it surely must in the artistic and cultural life of the nation, it cannot do it alone :—

The ITV Companies must make good their debt to the repertory movement; in fact they are already beginning to do so. In the words of W. E. Williams in the introduction to *The Priorities of Patronage :* "It is in the theatres, opera houses and concert halls of this country that there will continue to be found and trained the actors, singers, dancers, composers, decorators and producers on whom TV must so deeply depend for its creators and technicians. It is heartening to observe that this recognition already exists, and that the independent TV companies are now contributing timely and considerable grants-in-aid to many providing bodies of the arts."

The Universities need not be ashamed of making a practical contribution to the living theatre. Many producers who have gone straight from University into the professional theatre are now making their presence felt on the stage; if other universities can raise the funds to follow Manchester's example, this contribution may well become even more valuable.

Local Authorities must realise that they are lagging behind other bodies in supporting the professional theatre, and that they now have good precedent both for building and supporting new theatres. For until then, theatrical expansion in the Provinces will remain spasmodic and attended with a dangerous likelihood of economic failure.

Above all, *the Government* must not shirk its responsibilities in the National Theatre issue. Without it, our stage lacks a central inspiration; with it, the theatrical system of this country could change from one where all achievements are primarily seen in a local context, to one which the whole world acknowledged and envied.

Stratford and the Aldwych

EDMUND GARDNER

AROUND the beginning of April, it is customary for the Mayor of Stratford-upon-Avon to hold a reception for the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre Company. Each year a virtually new body of actors and actresses have gathered, in the Town Hall, to be introduced to leading members of the community. Usually there are several actors who have survived two, or more, seasons; there are the leading actors —the star names—signed on just for the coming plays; but the balance of the company is new, and the whole group is untried as a team.

A company such as this—mainly new to one another, and coming together for the express purpose of presenting five, or even six, of Shakespeare's plays, in a strenuous 36-week season—takes time to unite into a working entity; just as it takes time for it to reveal its intrinsic strength, or its latent weaknesses.

A company, working under Stratford's stringent conditions, rarely reaches its peak of consistent, corporate balance, and working strength, in under three months. And, by the time the season is drawing to a close, at the end of November, the feeling of impermanence within the company can play havoc with the *ensemble* work.

Psychologically, emotionally, and physically this is bad for actors, theatre, and audience alike. There may be—and usually is—brilliant individual playing. Yet, invariably, the question is asked: Why does Stratford lack a consistent style?

The answer is obvious. To establish continuity, Stratford needs, at the core of its company, a nucleus of players who have worked together over a longish period; who can mature and perfect an inherent, recognisable style which will spread through those who are engaged only on the normal short-term basis.

Though this answer is obvious, its attainment is far from simple. Shaftesbury Avenue is continually calling to the more outstanding young actor. Alternatively, films and television have their own particular appeal; and our leading actors cannot, normally, afford to play more than one Stratford season at a stretch. A company which is constantly changing can never hold actors for long, nor can it give any real opportunity for the development of a true style.

With the opening of the Aldwych Theatre as Stratford's London home, we at last see a revolutionary scheme for the foundation of a Company who will have an opportunity for really developed *ensemble* work.

When Peter Hall took over the directorship of the Memorial Theatre, at the beginning of last year, he announced certain basic changes in policy—including a re-designed stage, and a theme running through each Shakespearean season. The most far-reaching changes, however, were: the forging of a link between Stratford and London, with a West End theatre—the Aldwych—as a permanent home; and the foundation of a company which would have, as a hard core, actors and actresses —stars and supporting players—committed to a unique three-year contract.

With this contract, Peter Hall has cut through the initial difficulties—raised by the traditional economic structure of British Theatre—in forming a Company of

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Edmund Gardner is dramatic critic of the "Stratford-on-Avon Herald."

this kind. The Stratford contract is the most ambitious ever offered to a group of actors and actresses in this country. It gives the Stratford management first claim to contracted artists, for a period of three years, without seriously inhibiting their freedom; for they have the right to work for other managements, and in other fields of entertainment. The high cost of this venture has been partly offset by a £15,000 grant from the Gulbenkian Foundation, and, for the first time, the agreement allows holidays with pay.

The first contracted artists under this scheme have been secured from all levels. They are led by Dame Peggy Ashcroft and Max Adrian, who add enormous experience to superb talent; Dorothy Tutin, who is in the top rank of our established actresses; Richard Johnson, Eric Porter and Ian Bannen—thought by Mr. Hall to be the most promising of any young actors in the country. Most of the others have already done exciting work at Stratford, and there are several talented unknowns. In all there will be 30 contracted members, and around this nucleus Mr. Hall will form two companies totalling about 90 and including specially invited stars.

This is the motivating force behind the take-over of the Aldwych as Stratford's London theatre. By the very nature of Theatre today it is impossible, and undesirable, for this kind of company, on this scale, to spend their time working together only on Shakespeare. Above everything else, an actor, and a company, needs breadth of expression, which cannot be found in the Bard alone. Recognising this, Peter Hall is splitting his large company in two: one to play mainly non-Shakespearean classics, and modern plays, all the year round, at the Aldwych; the other to play Shakespeare at Stratford, from April to November. The productions will be so geared that leading artists, and the plays, will be interchangeable. So it will be possible for an actor to play Whiting, or Anouilh, in London on Monday, and Shakespeare in Stratford on Tuesday.

There will be no long runs at the Aldwych, though great successes might be transferred. Normally, important productions will be revived from time to time; and the first five plays chosen for London give some indication of future production policy. The company opened its London home, in December, with Webster's *Duchess of Malfi;* for a Christmas production we had Peter Hall's most successful Stratford - Leningrad - Mosgow - Stratford revival of *Twelfth Night.* Now, we look forward to works by two modern French dramatists: Giraudoux's *Ondine,* and Anouilh's *Becket*—both having their London premieres at the Aldwych; and a newly-commissioned play—*The Devils*—by John Whiting, based on *The Devils of Loudun,* Aldous Huxley's analysis of the ironic history of Urbain Grandier, a French libertine priest, tried and executed for sorcery in the 17th century.

The Aldwych literally opens the door to productions which would be difficult to mount successfully in London under existing circumstances. The director's intention is to use the stage as a stage, and not simply as a little slice of life. "I want plays which use the stage as a platform for imagination, other than naturalistically," he says.

Peter Hall affirms that this initial policy, for the Aldwych, is influenced by the effect Brecht has had on the Theatre in Germany—where dramatists write for companies. He is already commissioning more new plays, and is insistent that he wants non-naturalistic work, by people who wish to use the stage in an epic

manner, and who are not afraid of themes which require large casts.

This does not necessarily mean plays built on classic lines, with yards of blank verse; and, though Mr. Hall finds it interesting to see how many playwrights are turning to history for their themes, he believes that it is still possible to write epic plays which are not historical.

At this point, development is all-important. Development towards a controlled unity, and definite style. The bulk of the company, to be seen at the Aldwych over the next few months, have already worked together for a season at Stratford; yet Peter Hall doubts whether we shall see anything like a full development of style and unity in under two years.

He is not to be hurried, and it is plain that his approach is wholly realistic. For instance, he aims to do some of Brecht's work in the future, but is quite clear that the company are not yet up to the, necessarily, highly-developed standard.

Time for training—other than normal rehearsals—is a further problem. In all, twelve plays will be presented, between Stratford and the Aldwych, over the next twelve months—Peter Hall directing three of them himself. With time at a premium he is considering calling in more experts to assist John Barton, his verse training advisor, and Iris Warren, the noted speech expert, who shared the bulk of speech and verse training at Stratford during the 1960 season.

One of Peter Hall's first moves, as director of the Memorial Theatre, was the re-designing of the existing stage—a stumbling block to actors and directors since the new theatre opened in 1932. As well as the ever-present difficulty of a proscenium stage for Shakespearean productions, at Stratford, there is the added problem of a huge gap between actor and audience. Mr. Hall has at last bridged the gap, making, what he calls, the nearest thing to an open stage in a proscenium theatre.

A raked fore-stage now juts into the audience, like a triangle cut square below the apex. A series of receding arches mask the wings, and two rows of seats run along each side of the fore-stage, giving the illusion of a three-sided open stage.

This design—eminently suitable for classic and non-naturalistic productions—proved workable, and most successful, during last year's Shakespeare season, and has now been repeated at the Aldwych—with slight modifications in both theatres. Technically, productions can be moved with utmost ease between Stratford and London, while the actor will need little readjustment when transferring from one theatre to another.

The Stratford-Aldwych link is a bold, far-sighted, enterprise; and, like all such exciting ventures, it is bound to have its critics. Peter Hall's scheme is a vital injection into the life of British Theatre; of great value to those within the profession and without.

Harold Pinter Replies

Q: It seems at first sight that your plays might not meet with the success more conventional plays enjoy. Have you any idea why your plays have in fact been so successful, especially in the West End ?

A: No, I haven't. *The Birthday Party* did not succeed when put on in London two years ago. Very possibly if *The Caretaker* had been put on two years ago the same thing would have applied. There has been some change of climate that I cannot define; some change in the theatre-going public itself, or an adjustment of the public taste to certain developments in the drama.

Q: The theatre would itself probably give a great deal to define exactly what the shift in taste has been. In repertory there is a great deal of uncertainty about what will go over. Do you agree with what I have heard very forcibly put, that there is a very clear breach in requirement between the young members of an audience and the older members ?

A: I haven't made a study of audiences. I am not a sociologist. Others may find it easy to break the audience up into its component parts. I don't. All I know is that some members of an audience are receptive to the work in hand and others are not. I don't think that whether they're young or old has much to do with it.

Q: Do you try to visualise any particular audience when you are writing your plays?

A: No. None whatever.

Q: There is in this country at the moment a revival of the ballad opera form, as in *The Hostage* and *The Tinker.* Has your mind turned in this direction ?

A: No, it hasn't. It does not appeal to me. I enjoy watching these plays but I don't think I shall ever turn to that form myself.

Q: Do you think that this upsurge of new or revived forms of drama is likely to lead to coterie audiences ?

A: I shouldn't think so. *The Hostage* certainly did not, and I do not think that Simpson's *One Way Pendulum* did when it moved to the Criterion. I think that through various motives or needs all sorts of people came in. The same applies, of course, to *The Caretaker,* which is certainly not playing to coterie audiences.

Q: Do you oppose attempts to categorise plays—tragedy, comedy, tragi-comedy and so on ?

A: Yes. I think these arbitrary distinctions are very stale by now.

Q: Do you think in terms of categories at all when you consider plays ?

A: No, I don't. This category business is the most facile of things. My only categories are plays that I like and plays that I don't. Most critics apparently are not able to view a play as it is by itself, distinctly and simply. They must relate it to what they saw last week or last year; usually this relation is tenuous, cockeyed, unjust to both works. The critic is afraid to either sink or swim when he sees a play; he must grasp the lifebelt of a category.

Q: Have you ever consciously looked to any other playwright for the sources of your work ?

A: No, I certainly have not, but there is no question that Beckett is a writer whom I admire very much and have admired for a number of years. If Beckett's influence shows in my work that's all right with me. You don't write in a vacuum; you're bound to absorb and digest other writing;

Harold Pinter was interviewed for New Theatre Magazine by Harry Thompson.

and I admire Beckett's work so much that something of its texture might appear in my own. I myself have no idea whether this is so, but if it is, then I am grateful for it. However, I do think that I have succeeded in expressing something of myself.

Q: One accepts that you reflect certain aspects of the time more closely than any other playwright, especially the hidden fears that seem to affect so many of us today. Are you yourself aware of such fears? Did you begin to write out of a sense of contemporary strains and tensions, or does your style come to you objectively, by observation?

A: The last thing I would attempt to do is to disassociate myself from my work, to suggest that I am merely making a study of observable reality, from a distance. I am objective in my selection and arrangement, but, as far as I'm concerned, my characters and I inhabit the same world. The only difference between them and me is that they don't arrange and select. I do the donkey work. But they carry the can. I think we're all in the same boat.

Q: Among playwrights, Arnold Wesker has made the problem of political conscience very much his own. Do politics interest you?

A: I find most political thinking and terminology suspect, deficient. It seems to me a dramatist is entitled to portray the political confusion in a play if his characters naturally act in a political context, that is, if the political influences operating on them are more significant than any other consideration. But I object to the stage being used as a substitute for the soap box, where the author desires to make a direct statement at all costs, and forces his characters into fixed and artificial postures in order to achieve this. This is hardly fair on the characters. I don't care for the didactic or moralistic theatre. In England I find this theatre, on the whole, sentimental and unconvincing.

Q: Would you like to say anything about Arnold Wesker's approach to the unions?

A: To me, this seems to be happening on the other side of the moon. I mean, I can't fix the matter as having any grave or significant import for me. I suppose it's a laudable attitude from certain points of view, but these points of view simply do not interest me.

Q: You say that your plays spring essentially out of a situation. Would you say your creative imagination was more visual than verbal? Have you any idea of the mental process that goes on when you are writing?

A: I see things pretty clearly, certainly, but I am continually surprised by what I see and by what suddenly happens in the play while I am writing it. I do not know, however, that the visual is more important to me that the verbal, because I am pretty well obsessed with words when they get going. It is a matter of tying the words to the image of the character standing on the stage. The two things go very closely together.

Q: There is this question of formula. When success comes to a writer in the theatre, he tends towards making a formula to which he works. Do you think that you are conscious of a formula or of aiming at a formula?

A: No. I am aware that I was expected in some quarters to elaborate on my own formula. I did not see it as such, however, until I was told it was becoming one. Later I realised that in one short television play of mine there were characteristics that implied I was slipping into a formula. It so happened this was the worst thing I've written. The words and ideas had become automatic, redundant. That was

the red light for me and I don't feel I shall fall into that pit again. I trust that when I next fail it will be for different reasons. My basic approach to my work, anyway, is strongly opposed to such mechanism.

Q: Have you in any way concerned yourself with the perennial debate about theatre achitecture ?

A: I have worked in various types of theatre — in theatre-in-the-round, with arena staging, but mainly of course with the proscenium theatre. I am not terribly bothered about new forms. I always think of the proscenium stage when I'm writing. I did produce *The Birthday Party* myself in the round, and it was a rewarding and worthwhile experience. This form has certain qualities the proscenium stage lacks, but I should say an equal number of limitations.

Q: Do you find that your ten years' acting experience has conditioned your writing ?

A: Yes. I write pretty meticulously, and when I reach the last draft, I carefully work out the movements as I visualise them, and the pauses too. The thing must be capable of realisation, and it must work visually for me. If I feel something to be impossible visually, then I have to adjust it. I always write in direct relation to the visual image of people walking about and standing on the stage.

Q: You played Goldberg in *The Birthday Party* a few months ago, at the *Everyman* in Cheltenham. How did this affect you ?

A: I found it a very difficult part to act and the lines hard to learn, but I enjoyed it tremendously, and I do not think I did too badly.

Q: Have your scripts been modified much on the stage from their original form ?

A: I do of course make various adjustments in rehearsal, which I am happy to do. In certain cases, however, productions of my plays have been highly unsatisfactory because of the difficulty of reconciling one's own intentions with those of a director, who will in many cases see the play very differently.

Q: Do you prefer to direct your own plays ?

A: No. I'm not very good at it. I find I concentrate too much on every minute detail and so the play tends to overrun by about an hour.

Q: I find that your plays share with Simpson's a sense of cohesion—that the whole play hangs together and goes through on one note. Are you conscious of this ?

A: I am very concerned with the shape and consistency of mood of my plays. I cannot write anything that appears to me to be loose and unfinished. I like a feeling of order in what I write.

Q: Do you know soon after you have begun a play where it is likely to stop ?

A: Not entirely. I have a pretty good idea of the course of events and I know whereabouts it must stop, but I very rarely know how it is going to stop. All the preconceived notions I have are invariably wrong, for they are remedied by the characters in the writing. At the end of *The Caretaker,* there are two people alone in a room, and one of them must go in such a way as to produce a sense of complete separation and finality. I thought originally that the play must end with the violent death of one at the hands of the other. But then I realised, when I got to the point, that the characters as they had grown could never act in this way. Characters always grow out of all proportion to your original conception of them, and if they don't the play is a bad one.

Architects in the Theatre

ERNEST RICHARDS

UNTIL the thirties, theatres had been going up for so many years that it had hardly occurred to any one to question their shape or function, or indeed their purpose. Show business had, until very recently, hardened into an established routine, and it is show business theatres that have been built since the middle of the last century: they show the actors in as pretty a picture as possible, and the display is mainly for business reasons.

Now that commercial interests can no longer afford to build theatres, it is becoming a matter for public concern to examine the purpose and consequently the desirable shapes of theatres, and at long last—but for the first time in this country—actors, producers, architects and theatre historians have met together to discuss the design of new theatres. This was at York, from 9th-13th September, and the general conclusion was that a flexible theatre was the most desirable form to-day — one capable of presenting plays in proscenium, arena and the round—and that where a choice had to be made between picture-frame and a form of open stage, an open stage should be chosen. It would give more satisfaction on two counts: it offered greater artistic possibilities, and it would cost less.

The actor's point of view was put by John Neville, whose speech appeared in the last issue. Richard Southern, Walter Hodges and Richard Leacroft spoke as theatre historians and designers; two architects, Peter Moro and Elidir Davies, spoke of their own theatre designs in relation to current trends; an actor teacher, Michael Warre, spoke of the projected studio theatre for L.A.M.D.A.; a leading amateur, Alfred Emmet, described the evolution of the new Questors theatre; J. L. Hodgkinson, Drama Director of the Arts Council, gave details of local authority plans for new theatres; E. Williams, senior architect of the L.C.C., dealt with the requirements for public safety; D. G. Barron talked about the design of school halls; and Stephen Joseph talked about theatre in the round.

Richard Southern, speaking about the evolution of the proscenium theatre, pointed out that we did not get the complete picture-frame stage till Bancroft's Theatre Royal in 1880, a massive gilded frame "perfect for illusion and artistic pleasure."

Illusion was the key word in any discussion of proscenium, and he quoted Percy Corry's remarks about the actor being "aided by the separation of his world from that of the audience; emotion was heightened by separation. If he intrudes upon us, he becomes a performer not an illusion." (Brecht's is the name which obviously springs to mind here: one asks whether the emotional subjugation of the audience is always desirable, and indeed, if this is to be the aim, whether the cinema is not much better able to do this). Alfred Emmet, speaking later, made the necessary distinction between the illusion of reality which the proscenium attempts, and the illusion supplied by the imagination, which the open stage offers to its audience.

Dr. Southern, in his second talk, examined the basic shapes of theatres from India, Bali, Tibet, Japan and Africa, which were variations upon a simple arena or in-

ERNEST RICHARDS is a tutor in English and Drama at the Burton Manor Residential College for Adult Education.

the-round pattern (rich in suggestions, these, for anyone working with children or young people) and compared these with Greek, Medieval and Elizabethan stages : in all of them, the simple shape allowed a complex art to grow, an art form moreover which involved very much more than words : "Theatre is bigger than the words." (this emphasis on the literary rather than the theatrical elements in drama is still predominant in our universities : hence only one fully established drama department in the country, and how many flexible theatres are attached to our universities ? Come to that, how many theatres of any kind ?) None of these stages, also, involved the complications of scenery : its expense, its inflammability, and the need to provide machinery for changing it. They were primitive only in form, not in range of emotional expression.

Walter Hodges discussed the problems of establishing the details of the Elizabethan stage, and emphasised the contrast between the two-dimensional movement of the picture-frame stage and the three dimensional of the arena platform : " If an actor walks towards you, he should get bigger." There was a focal relationship here, and it could be dynamic. He showed that an actor standing in the centre of the front of the Elizabethan stage would in fact be at the central point, both vertically and horizontally, of the "wooden O": he could not be in a more commanding position.

In discussing the difficulties of designing a flexible theatre, both Mr. Leacroft and Mr. Moro urged the importance of considering not only the technical problems of the sight lines, acoustics and lighting, but the less tangible ones of arriving at an architectural form which would provide for the different atmosphere demanded by quite different actor-audience relationships. If you were planning to combine proscenium with arena, said Mr. Moro, you would have to decide whether the action were to take place outside or inside the auditorium. He had tackled this problem in his design for Nottingham's new theatre by using a circular auditorium : when the proscenium was being used, this was beyond the circular drum of the house, so that the audience looked at it as another world; when the arena stage was used, the circle was made complete, and the stage then appeared to be *within* the auditorium.

Mr. Elidir Davies, designer of the Mermaid Theatre, emphasised the importance of contact between actor and audience, not just during the performance, but before and after : the physical sense of touch was rarely explored. In the Teatro Sant' Erasmo in Milan (a transverse stage, with the audience in two main blocks, on either side) the audience collected on the stage until they moved to their seats when the performance was to begin. They had hoped to experiment with this at the Mermaid : the stage originally was to have been 70′ deep, instead of its present 45′, and the audience would have crossed the stage to get to the restaurant.

As most theatres in future would be commissioned by local authorities, it was vital that councillors should know what developments were taking place in the theatre. Many interesting experiments were being made in the halls of schools and colleges, and Mr. Barron described how, by using steps and units and rostra of all sizes and shapes, it was possible to use any part of the hall as an acting or watching area. High stages and flat auditorium floors gave the worst combination; a low stage and raked seating the best. It was possible now to obtain portable raked seating which could concertina into an end wall, where it

was necessary to use the hall for many different activities.

Opportunities for amateurs to build or adapt their own theatres were greater now than before. Apart from the Questors, other groups were designing flexible theatres. The York Settlement Players, for instance, were planning a theatre as part of an Adult Education Centre which was to be completely adaptable. It would seat about 250, and the stage would have sliding and pivoting proscenium sides, and moveable stage units which could be brought forward to form an arena platform or would give raised seating for performances in the round. For L.A.M.D.A., Michael Warre had designed a flexible theatre with a gallery for lights all the way round, and with the raked seating built in sections to allow of easy movement to create fresh shapes.

The fact that the York Theatre would be part of a larger social unit is an indication of current trends. The theatre, which at the moment is very much a minority interest, would have to attract new audiences if it were to flourish. New social habits must be catered for and the new theatres should either be part of larger community services, or contain within themselves facilities for many more activities than just watching plays. Peter Moro and Elidir Davies urged that the theatre building be used to the full : it should contain restaurant and bar, and exhibit paintings and sculpture, be used for music and talks, and be open to the public through the day and evening, so that people regarded themselves as part of it, rather than as ticket buyers for a 2½ hour sale. This would not solve the problem mentioned by Kenneth Tynan in a recent "Observer" of discovering a basis of common assumption between audience and actor on which both could build, but it might get people into the theatre, and into a kind of relationship with actors and producers (both during, and outside, the performance) when attitudes could become clarified, rather than tacitly ignored, as now.

The success of Manchester's Library Theatre, for instance—the theatre built inside a library—had encouraged the corporation to plan two more for the suburbs —with this time a change of emphasis, for they were to be libraries built round theatres. Leicester, Birmingham and Croydon, said Mr. Hodgkinson, were at work on new civic centres which would incorporate theatres. Pooling of resources was taking place, which would help to break down the rigid divisions within the theatre : the Oxford Playhouse would in future house not only the professional company, but also the University's amateur groups. The first permanent arena theatre in this country would go up at Chichester—mainly a private venture, but with help from the Corporation.

It was important that the local authorities should not be misled by grandiose designs of Edwardian magnificence, nor tempted by an impressive and ego-building estimate, but that they should, even at the cost of spending less on the theatre than their neighbours, go for a type of structure which, as Stephen Joseph remarked, would extend our concept of theatre. The basis of all dramatic effort—on the part of author, actor, or audience—is exploration, rather than assertion, and we need now theatres which do not assert a stolid materialism, but which create conditions for an enquiry into spiritual and artistic values.

Copies of the October Issue of "New Theatre Magazine," containing the text of John Neville's address "The Actor's Viewpoint," may be obtained from the publishers, price 2/- plus 6d. postage.

An Oxford Viewpoint

ADRIAN BRINE

Puff. Why, by that shake of the head, he gave you to understand that even though they had more justice in their cause, and wisdom in their measures—yet, if there was not a greater spirit shown on the part of the people, the country would at last fall a sacrifice to the hostile ambition of the Spanish monarchy.

Sneer. The devil! did he mean all that by shaking his head?

Puff. Every word of it—if he shook his head as I taught him to.

(The Critic.)

THE twentieth century Puff would be the earnest young producer fresh from university; while the actor playing Lord Burleigh would probably be an old stager with twenty years experience behind him. Had Sneer had the chance of talking with him, the old boy would have described the rehearsal otherwise. "I don't know, he kept on about this and that, the Spanish king, the part played by the mob in plays of that time: half an hour he went on, and all he wanted me to do was shake my bloody head. If he hadn't kept talking, we could have gone through it nine more times."

The contrast between these two is manifest in other instances. The young professional actor, fresh from university, is still thinking about the productions of *Otho the Great* and *The Women of Trachis* he played in; feels he's rather honouring the profession by entering it. Twenty years later he's producing *My Three Angels* and renouncing all his experience on the university stage as valueless. The examples of young actors leaving the university to enter the Labour Exchange are many; but many too are those who spend two years in rep. before going to college, and once there find it easier to get into the rugger team or the college Dining Club than to get the role they covet. The disparity between University theatre and professional theatre is enormous in some respects, minute in others. Since many young people avowedly use the university as their drama school it might be valuable to look at these disparities more closely, to select what is permanently valuable about theatre in a university.

The point of view I am putting forward comes to me after three years at Oxford, where I went with some professional experience behind me, and after some months of continuous experience after going down, which include helping to launch a new professional company. Oxford has, of course, no drama faculty; and has only just acquired a University theatre, in the shape of a large professional theatre with a picture-frame stage.

A University theatre (with or without building) is a living toy. The freshman comes to Oxford with a general interest in theatre as a part of culture, but with little more experience than that of acting Ophelia or Bolingbroke—according to his capacity—at school. He finds a cult of certain second or third-year figures. Some of them will give him an audition. If he's cast, he may be rehearsing five afternoons a week for six weeks (which he's never done before) and then acting in front of well-known national critics and the occasional professional who's come up from London or Stratford. If he's obviously talented, and ambitious, he'll soon find he's on the committee of this, producing that, is joked about in the undergraduate press, and eventually probably the centre of some

cult himself. (I don't claim this happens to everybody, and it certainly isn't autobiographical. But no-one will deny it doesn't happen to two or three people every year.) It's all very quick; success is heady; and soon he's told his tutor that he's going on the professional stage.

Occasional incidents disturb him. Friends he has asked up from his home town are mysteriously left cold by a production that sets the student audience cheering and stamping. A visiting professional director, brought in to do a major production, will suddenly cast someone less experienced and seemingly less talented than himself, for the part he wants : but he is encouraged in his humiliation by Professor X's praise of his verse-speaking in the last production. Or an undergraduate tour, whereon he rehearsed six hours a day for a fortnight, and then acted for three weeks, wearies him temporarily of theatre. But these things don't disturb him for long. He understands them later—when he's working professionally.

Comes the transition into the profession. Probably he has rejected the idea of a drama school being able to teach him anything; probably the drama school has also rejected the idea, though for different reasons. And he resents the idea of going to a small provincial town to act in West End successes. It's odd, perhaps, that whereas he would never consider becoming an acrobat or a violinist without hours of hard work and years of experience, he thinks acting's different. You've got it, or you haven't, he says. Old actors wear their experience as N.C.O.'s wear their tapes : as a quick way to end an argument. And he finds his Oxford experience treated in the same surprising way as his years of training in the school C.C.F. were scorned during his first weeks in the army. Yet that experience can't have been entirely in vain. Soon it strikes him that the analogy doesn't end there : he's after the rewards of theatre without the hard work—he's expecting to wear pips without doing any square-bashing. Is it really Theatre he wants for his career ? or is he just stage-struck like a deb ?

Most likely he's formed an odd conception of the professional actor too : and he is surprised to find that the actor who's set the town talking with his performance of Hamlet wears torn jeans and a cloth cap; and the man who's playing an Agatha Christie detective reads Racine in the wings. He finds actors more kind-speaking than many of his undergraduate contemporaries, but seldom cultured, and he is tempted to write off many of them as thick. Interesting observations on this very point appeared in last term's undergraduate magazine, *Isis*. Patrick Garland, one-time O.U.D.S. president, who was at Bristol Old Vic recently, had written wittily on the hard-boiled professional's resentment of ' young people of more talent than themselves bursting in without training and getting several rungs ahead on the ladder.' Mr. Duncan Ross wrote a reply pointing out that there exists a basic difference between intelligence and ' verbal thinking': remarking how venerable institutions tend to encourage young people to confuse *words* with *things,* and to mistake ' alternative modes of defining thinking as inferior.' To me, this distinction is absolutely vital. The student maybe shouldn't listen when elderly actor-managers put on horn-rimmed glasses and pontificate about Shakespeare, because this actor-manager doesn't happen to think through the medium of words. He thinks about Shakespeare in theatrical terms, and the results of his thought are to be seen not at the afternoon lecture, but in the evening performance. Maybe to talk to he

doesn't appear 'intelligent', in the undergraduate's sense of the word, because what he possesses is a kind of 'life-intelligence.' People's behaviour is his book: his test-tube is the 'atmosphere' in a room.

On the reverse side of the coin, is the attempt of the academic figure to create 'theatre.' Professor Y, by the student's standards, is indubitably intelligent. But *theatrically* he is as thick as a post. This is probably because he is focused on secondary matters: what he cares about a play is its literary quality—the music of its verse, its historical importance as a forerunner of something or other; and when he comes to produce it he falls prey to the temptation to introduce irrelevant cultural associations. 'Maybe you don't like the costumes,' said one theatrically-inclined don, 'but I'm dressing the play after Tiepolo.'

'But,' we protested, 'the audience has probably never heard of Tiepolo.'

Came the reply: 'Then I'll teach them.'

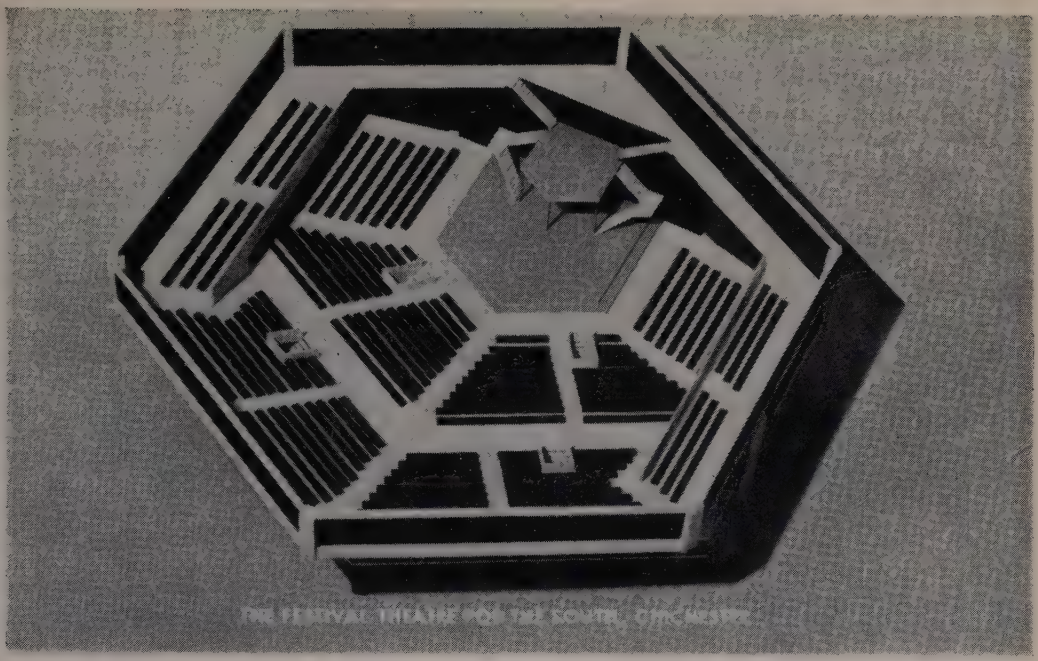
What our undergraduate-turned-actor finds is that you can't be high-handed towards the public, or teach them about Tiepolo: you *can* excite them and move them. The first thing he learns, I imagine, is also—according to Quiller Couch—the first rule of good writing: that it should be appropriate: that the play he performs is appropriate to time and place (useless to produce *The Cenci* in Barnstaple) and that his acting is appropriate to the production, and to the hall. In theatre, said the great Jouvet, supreme example of sheer theatrical intelligence, *tout est immédiat*. The sovereign test is what comes across, and the quality of it. (Not many Lord Burleighs, however experienced or intelligent, could convey all that Puff intended simply by shaking their heads). What counts above all is this 'theatrical intelligence.' Most of what he had learned in the lecture-hall about the history of drama (at least in Oxford) he can store away in a cupboard with his philology notes, once he's gone down.

What he has learned of value has been in his contact with an audience, on the stage itself; and all the preliminaries to the staging of a play—set designing, lighting, business management, rehearsal planning. Then he starts again, as though learning a new branch of science, or a new language, and tries to learn to think, now, theatrically.

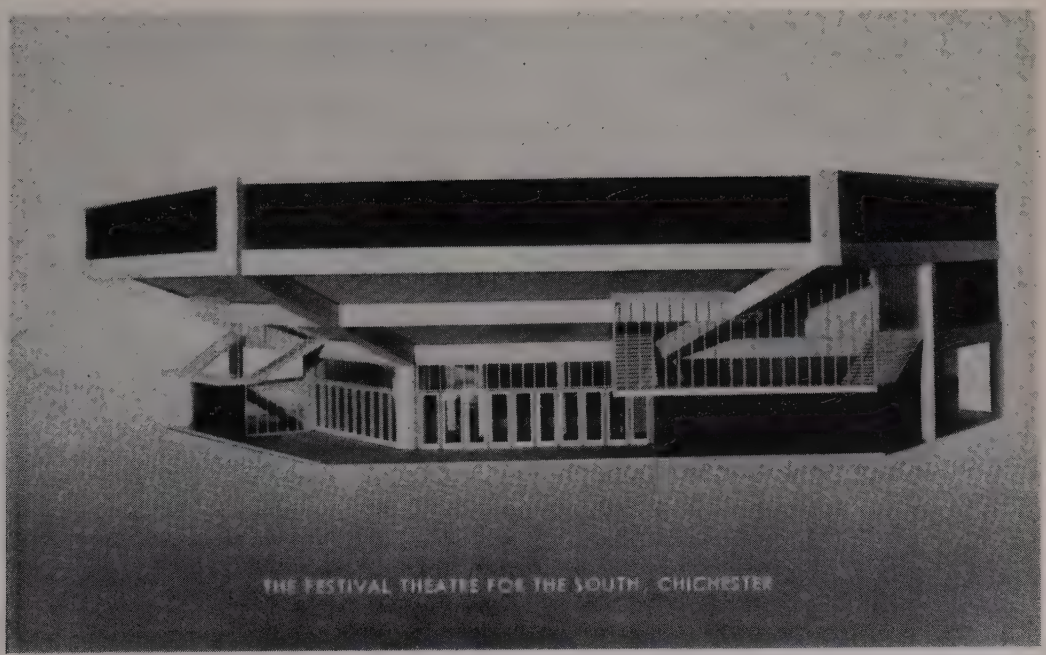
Peggy Ashcroft as the Duchess, and Eric Porter as Ferdinand in "*The Duchess of Malfi*", the first production by the Stratford company at the Aldwych, London.

[*Photo:* David Sim.]

Harold Pinter (left) as Goldberg in "*The Birthday Party*", at the *Everyman* Theatre, Cheltenham.

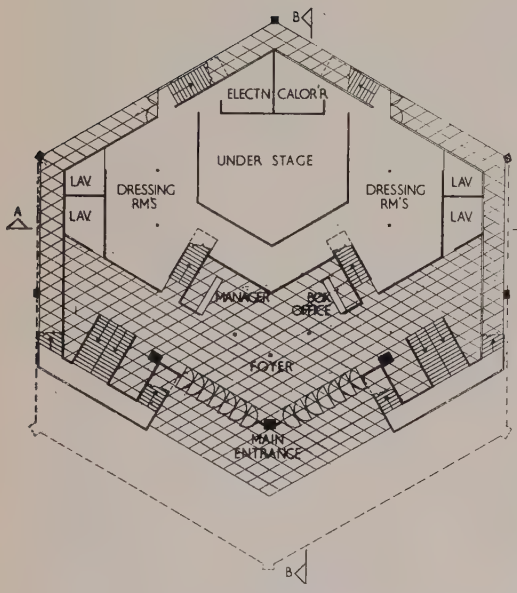


THE FESTIVAL THEATRE FOR THE SOUTH, CHICHESTER

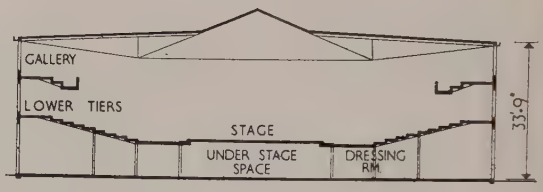


THE FESTIVAL THEATRE FOR THE SOUTH, CHICHESTER

The Architect's Plans
of the
Chichester Festival Theatre



Ground floor plan



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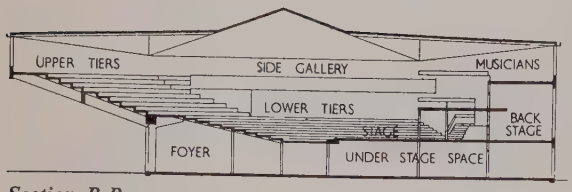

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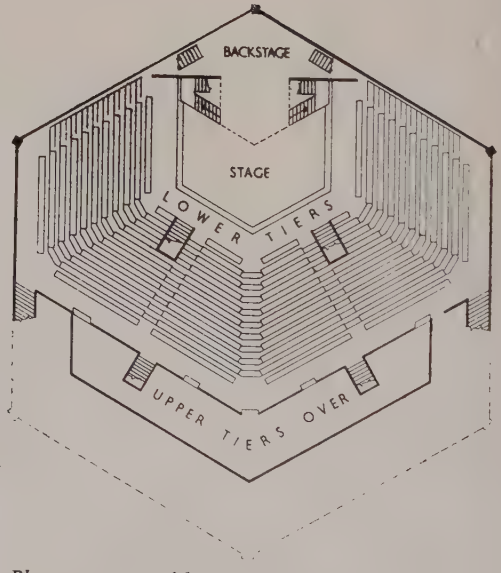

Plan at stage and lower tiers

[reproduced, by kind permission, from *The Architect's Journal*].

The Chichester Festival Theatre

It has recently been announced that plans for a Festival Theatre in Chichester have been approved by the City Council, and building will begin shortly. In this article PHILIP POWELL describes the architectural features of the theatre, and L. EVERSHED-MARTIN, Chairman of the Executive Committee for the Festival Theatre, gives an account of the purpose and history of the project.

General

A THEATRE, seating about 1,400, is proposed for a Chichester Drama Festival, to take place during the summer months. The design is based on a recent movement in favour of the return to the character of the Elizabethan theatre, where the audience virtually encompassed the players and where the stage was of a more simple nature than the modern proscenium stage.

Similar productions to those envisaged for Chichester have taken place in the Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh, during the Edinburgh Festival—under the direction of Dr. Tyrone Guthrie—and at Stratford, Ontario. Here, at Chichester, for the first time in this country, a completely new building is proposed to answer and express the requirements of such productions. Although there is no proscenium at the Mermaid Theatre in London, it was possible to provide seats only in front of the stage, owing to the fact that the theatre was built within the shell of an old warehouse.

Siting

The theatre is sited at the edge of a large park close to the centre of Chichester, about sixty miles from London. It is placed in the centre of a "horseshoe" of mature elm trees, and from the foyer there are fine views over the park.

Character and Design of Building

The aim has been to express as clearly as possible the internal design and planning of the building — hence, the tiered auditorium encompassing the stage is clearly seen by showing its underside raised on slender columns with a glassed-in space below forming the entrance and foyer. The auditorium is hexagonal in shape, with the stage offset to one end which allows the seating to be arranged round four facets of the stage. There are side galleries which are continuous with the upper tiers at the back of the auditorium. The seats are steeply raked and everyone will be within 60 ft. of the stage. Acting can take place on 3 levels and cast can enter the auditorium through the entrances in the gangways.

It is essential that the building be initially constructed as cheaply as possible but it is hoped that it will subsequently be possible to improve and add to the building. For example, it is envisaged that a restaurant, bars etc. might, in the first instance, be housed in tents, which could be taken down at the end of each season. In later years the intention is to replace these with permanent buildings and, if necessary, to add further buildings extending westwards from the base of the auditorium and surrounding a paved courtyard.

Construction and Finishes

The supporting framework of the building consists of *insitu* reinforced concrete columns and beams, with an exposed aggregate finish. The seating tiers between these beams are of precast concrete. The infilling walls will be of glass in timber frames (for example, to the foyer) or, where solid, will consist of rendered and painted blockwork.

The roof structure consists of three steel cables (stressed to about 140 tons each) supported on the reinforced concrete frame at the corners of the auditorium and carrying a steel lattice ring beam over the middle of the auditorium. Light steel members and timber form the infilling of the roof, and the construction will be exposed internally. The centre of the roof is in the form of a lantern and is of steeper pitch than the main roof, so that it will be visible from the ground, disclosing to an outside observer that the building is, in fact, roofed over and not open to the sky.

PHILIP POWELL

Honorary Theatre Adviser
Dr. Tyrone Guthrie
Architects Powell and Moya
(Assistant : Christopher Stevens)
Consulting Structural Engineers
Charles Weiss & Partners
Consulting Electrical Engineers
Peter Jay & Partners
Quantity Surveyors
Davis, Belfield & Everest

How did it all begin ? I hope people will always want to know the answer to this question for therein lies the secret of perpetual interest in the adventure and an increasing rather than decreasing pride of partnership between the audiences and the pioneers. It is, I feel, the reason for the ever growing success of Pitlochry, Stratford Ontario and the Mermaid. People still say " Do you know it began under a tent " or " in a house at Hampstead " and there is a note of achievement which is shared—it is personal. Extravagant buildings glittering with modern decoration, sumptuous appointments and the latest technical achievements put up by Combines have a seven day glory, but there is nothing to be shared except the initial wonderment—it is an impersonal product.

This particular adventure began when I happened to hear in the "Monitor" series on television one Sunday evening in January, 1959, the account by Dr. Tyrone Guthrie of the Stratford Ontario venture. I was thrilled that a community in a town of 20,000 inhabitants could have envisaged such a splendid idea and brought it through to a triumphant success. Without any real connection with the professional theatre, but with a great love for it, I immediately wondered why the cathedral city of Chichester, an obvious home for the arts, should not do as well. Perhaps it could even try to improve on this idea.

The trinity of factors necessary for success which I considered they had evolved, were first, that they had not attempted the grandiose at the beginning, but had simply dug out an amphitheatre and covered it with a tent, to have the barest, but adequate beginning. Thus they proposed a cost that could be accepted as a possible achievement by public subscription. Too many propositions fail to start because the cost of the all-embracing proposal is frightening.

Secondly they decided to do the best of productions in the best possible way. The finest actors and producers were obtained —Sir Alec Guinness and Irene Worth, with Tyrone Guthrie producing.

Thirdly they were to do all this with an arena stage—the answer for the 3-dimensional theatre production, which can compete fully and triumphantly with the flat screen of the cinema and television.

I envisaged a theatre built first to minimum requirements but absolutely correct for arena presentation, with a large enough audience (1,400) to be able to pay for the best professional actors and pro-

ducers, who in turn would draw the crowds and make it pay. It is obviously necessary to await the relaxation from television hypnosis before attempting to attract the people from their homes in winter. A summer festival season therefore of, say, an initial 10 weeks, which later could be extended, would realistically cut down overheads during the rest of the year by total closure except for one-day events before and after the season of plays. Population in the southern part of England is doubled during these months and the seasonal increase changes at least every fortnight.

If the City Council would allow the theatre to be built in Chichester's beautiful Oaklands Park (which is at the very walls of this ancient Roman city) with a 99 years lease at a peppercorn rent, then the usual worry of the landlord's share would be removed. In such lovely surroundings this could be a centre for Drama as is Glyndebourne for Opera. Sixty miles from London and on the main coastal road, with a tarmacadamed car park for 500 cars a few yards from the theatre entrance, it would be easily accessible by road and rail.

After a year of contemplation and consultation with Dr. Guthrie and a host of professional advisers, these fancies are becoming facts. The design of the theatre by Powell and Moya, who came to the problem with minds free from theatrical convention, has been accepted with acclamation by everyone. Up to the time of our Press Conference in February of this year we had not spent a pound, thanks to the marvellous gifts of brochures and the services of public relation organisations, clerical staffs and so on, not to mention invaluable help from many individuals.

Since then we have collected £40,000 by individual donations alone—no grants from local authorities or, as yet, from the major Trusts, though I hope the latter will recognise the good we are trying to do.

I am convinced that cultural entertainment of this sort should be free of the restrictive control of authorities, but instead should be sponsored by a non-profit-making Trust formed " by the people for the people." Those who join with us will do so willingly because they feel it is a worthwhile endeavour and they will know the satisfaction of being founders of an exciting new theatre.

The enthusiasm has become infectious and the dream is fast coming true.

During the year of preparation the Gulbenkian Committee Report " Help for the Arts " was published, and this strengthened my conviction that we are on the right road. In the October issue of this magazine, I was delighted to read John Neville's inspiring article which calls for such a theatre sponsored in this very way. With continued goodwill and hard work by many people, the Chichester Festival Theatre will be the first permanent arena theatre in the British Isles and I hope will make a useful contribution to the future prestige of British Drama.

L. EVERSHED-MARTIN

An Arts Centre for Newcastle

PETER TROWER

The Gulbenkian Foundation has awarded £15,000 to assist the building of an Arts Centre to house the activities of the Newcastle People's Theatre Arts Group.

"TOPSY just grow'd." So did the Newcastle upon Tyne People's Theatre Arts Group. Its firm foundation was the People's Theatre itself, established in 1911 as an amateur play-producing society with the object of presenting plays of real quality. Since then over 700 productions have been offered to its audience—plays by Shakespeare, every full-length play written by Shaw (who visited the theatre twice), Ibsen, Tchekov and the best "moderns" of each succeeding generation. In spite of difficult years in the "depression" period and the regular raids on the Tyne during World War II, no concession has ever been made to Box Office appeal. The theatre's immaculate sense of play choice has been unswerving for just on fifty years and the loyalty of its 2,000 plus audience is proof of the confidence it has in this stringent policy. The People's Theatre itself, after 1929, has been a converted non-conformist chapel seating in mild discomfort 310 people. Twelve productions are presented each year.

The Tyneside Film Society was founded in 1934, with some People's Theatre members on its committee and many in its audience. Following the general lines of the film society movement, it was highly successful until the middle of the second war when it closed down from lack of support. The diehards of the People's Theatre, battling at that time with overdrafts and mortgages, soon took over the responsibility of bringing to Tyneside the best foreign films and lectures on film subjects and at the end of the war formally absorbed the Tyneside Film Society.

In 1947 the activities of the People's Theatre organisation were still further widened by the formation of the Tyneside Music Society. Again, interesting programmes have been provided for the connoisseur—in this case the keen lovers of serious music—given almost invariably by professional musicians of high standing. The programmes were and still are principally by soloists and small ensembles.

With only limited accommodation at their disposal in their Green Room (Coffee Room) the People's also started monthly art exhibitions running concurrently with their stage presentations. Over the last fifteen years a fascinating variety of work by period and modern artists, photographs, posters, sculpture, pottery and children's art has been displayed to an appreciative yet discerning audience.

For the last four years, in conjunction with the Arts Council of Great Britain, an annual Poetry Reading has been organised and now a reading of poetry and prose by members of the People's Theatre company has been added to the yearly events.

This diversification of activity naturally attracted a comprehensive title and the name of the People's Theatre Arts Group was chosen to perpetuate the founder member and to indicate the general interest of the organisation in the artistic field.

Three times a year an Arts Group programme, for the Spring, Summer and Autumn Seasons, is issued, detailing and

Peter Trower has been a member of the People's Theatre organisation for over 25 years, and is at present Chairman of their New Building Appeal Committee.

reviewing all the various activities. The ticket application form, ranging as it does from theatre, film and opera-film to concert, lecture and reading, has been compared skittishly to an Income Tax Return but the audience takes it in good part and 97 per cent. of them studiously fill in a self-addressed label and provide a stamp for the return of the tickets required. Each activity publicises each other Group activity in its programmes which carry no general advertising.

The subscribers vary in their tastes. There are 'theatre only' people and 'film only' people, but the majority of the Group audience goes to more than one activity either consistently or frequently. Prices are kept low and a season ticket for four plays cost 12/- and five films 13/-. Although tickets for the most part are sold by the season, the various branches are by no means 'closed shops'. Film Society members may buy guest tickets for their friends and in spite of all "reserved seat" theatre tickets normally being sold out at the beginning of each four-month season, a certain number of unreserved seats are kept for sale on the night of the play. Students at schools and the University get price reductions and certain plays (usually the classics) have their run extended to accommodate large school parties.

At the moment Group activities are housed in six (and sometimes seven) different halls in Newcastle city. The Film Society for instance uses two smallish news theatres to accommodate its 1,500 plus audiences in four sessions. One copy of the film to be exhibited travels, reel by reel, up and down Newcastle's Northumberland Street from show to show and this seemingly precarious arrangement has never yet come to real grief.

The natural outcome of this varied activity run by a completely amateur organisation was, of course, the demand for a central home to house all attractions and new ones too. As long ago as 1949, the Group bought a plot of land in Jesmond, a residential suburb in Newcastle and ideally situated to serve the Group audience, which comes from a wide area round the Tyne as far North as Berwick, as far West as Carlisle and South to Darlington and Middlesbrough.

Town Planning difficulties, however, prevented the development of this site and later it was sold, profitably, to a local private school. Scores of alternative sites and buildings were inspected but none proved suitable until there was a chance to buy a comparatively new 1600-seater cinema in Heaton, another Newcastle suburb only two miles away from the City Centre. This property was finally purchased last year by the People's Theatre Arts Group for £27,500, from the Group's own resources.

Much work has to be done to translate the existing cinema to an ideal multi-purpose auditorium. A completely new stage and stage tower is to be built giving alternatives of a proscenium arch stage with or without an orchestra pit, a wide apron stage or an open stage approached by steps from the auditorium. The 1000-seater stalls area is to be reduced to a 300-seater ground floor with a steeper rake and better sight lines. This change allows the provision of an entrance foyer and an assembly room large enough to be used for interval coffees, small concerts, lectures and readings. The balcony seats 600 but this is to be divided by a movable screen rather like the one used in the Malmo Civic Theatre. This will enable the Film Society to use the whole of the balcony and the more intimate theatre to use only the front half. The finished result will enable events seating 100/150 to be housed in the

assembly room, a 300 audience in the stalls, 600 in the stalls and front balcony, or 900 in the whole auditorium.

The People's Theatre Arts Group expects to use the new Centre for two weeks every month, leaving it available for the rest of the time for hire to other local amateur societies and to visiting professional companies.

The conversion of the building will be starting early in 1961 and the cost of this work will be over £50,000. Towards this sum £26,000 has been raised or promised, including £10,000 from the Newcastle City Council. In addition, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation has made a special grant of £15,000 for the object of improving the quality and finish of the whole project. The expenditure of this donation is being made with the expert help of the Council of Industrial Design.

Within a year the Group expects to be operating all its activities in the new Arts Centre and for the first time it will have the challenging task of welding all its audiences in a single social unit, and of providing a thriving community centre unique in its own way in the country.

The People's Theatre Art Centre
Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Towards A New Playhouse

STEPHEN JOSEPH

DURING the next dozen years it is likely that a number of new theatres will be built in this country. There are two new sources of patronage emerging, in the form of civic authorities, which have, for instance, been responsible for the Belgrade, Rotherham and Scunthorpe theatres; and the Universities, led by Bristol with its Studio, whose example is now being followed by, amongst others, Manchester, Leeds, Southampton, Oxford and Nottingham. It is to be hoped that the new patrons, together with the architects who build for them and the public that they serve, will learn as much as possible about theatre building. We all, in this country, start from a poorly-informed background. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, since the beginning of the century, there has been a virtual monopoly here of only one form of theatre—the theatre with the picture-frame stage. Secondly, we are an insular people and travel little, so that we are mostly unaware of the old and new theatres in Europe, the East and in America. History books help us but little; and most books on theatre are concerned with plays or with actors, and few with theatre buildings. We have at the moment only a single University where a Drama Department promotes study of the theatre. We have very few scholars of the theatre and, worse still, very little widely-disseminated knowledge except of the most superficial sort. It follows that few people are interested in the theatre, and the press and television give it meagre attention. For most people the idea of theatre is limited and, as far as buildings are concerned, the picture-frame stage is the only accepted form. This restricted view is encouraged by the fact that we pay a sort of respect to the arts of ballet and opera, and assume that they may as well be presented in the same building as plays. Thus playhouse and opera-house have become indistinguishable.

The disappointing feature of this limited outlook is that it makes a vicious circle, and promotes a limited theatre which promotes a limited interest which encourages the limited outlook. There is some indication that the circle tightens. Certainly the medieval and Elizabethan theatre seems to have been relatively popular. After the Restoration, the drama was off to a poor start, and only the age of Victorian melodrama restored something like popularity to the playhouse. The Victorians liked to reduce their games and pastimes to order and rule; they passed on to us a theatre well regulated but not amenable to development and variety. Our theatre has remained in a state of permanent dwindle and every effort to restore life to it is frustrated by conformity to the old, orthodox rules.

It follows, then, that the new patrons are unlikely to have a wide vision of the function of theatre, or of the building that will be the new playhouse. Architects and audiences are equally in the dark. Those of us who are aware of the real potentialities of theatre must therefore do everything we can to discover new forms of building, and to break through the accepted rules of drama in order to achieve something both more exciting and more acceptable to public and connoisseurs alike.

There is much to help us in the new theatres of America, in the drama departments of Universities in the United States. Frank Lloyd Wright's Civic Theatre Centre in Dallas, Texas; the Casa Mañana

—a geodesic dome by Buckminster Fuller —at Fort Worth; the new Harvard University Theatre which is fully flexible; these are a few examples of unusual playhouses which may suggest new forms of theatre for us. In Germany there are many fine new opera-houses. They are inspiring. But we should remember that they are opera-houses, not playhouses, built on immense budgets, in a country where the contemporary playwright hardly exists. We, on the other hand, have many good playwrights, and no noticeable sign of large budgets. In the end it is practical experiment and experience which will determine the shape of our playhouses, and the whole significance of our drama in the years to come.

A programme of theatre building is needed. This programme must be bold and various. There is no need to encourage the building of orthodox opera houses—they will be built willy-nilly. It is a pity, though, that the Belgrade and the Royalty both suffer from limitations of budget or of space and cannot compare with European examples of the same form. At least one really magnificent new picture-frame theatre in this country would be welcome, It might form the centrepiece of the National Theatre Complex. We need a large number of experimental open stages. The Mermaid has set an example of the open end-stage theatre: we need another half-dozen variations on the same theme. The travelling Arena Theatre is a good pattern for an open platform-stage, and we need several of the sort built specially for this style of presentation. The new theatre proposed for Chichester is a variant of this on a much larger scale, and will be welcome. We have no example of an Elizabethan theatre; a few built after designs by Hodges, Southern, Adams and Hotson would be useful — and particularly appropriate in universities. The Pembroke Theatre is a hall converted to theatre in the round, and the Studio Theatre Company travels with this form of presentation; a dozen or so theatres built for central staging are clearly required. Finally, the Questors is setting an example with a small flexible theatre—and many of these are absolutely necessary. A small flexible theatre would be a desirable adjunct to the National Theatre Complex. It would be the obvious choice for towns and cities which cannot afford to build at least an opera-house, an open stage theatre and a theatre in the round.

It is, of course, worth noting that the four professional companies in this country using unorthodox stage forms have still not achieved any definitive style appropriate to each particular stage. The Mermaid has, as yet, presented only a few plays. Little has been seen there that could not have been done equally effectively on a conventional picture-frame stage. The permanent background set, a child of the Elizabethan stage and of the Vieux Colombier, has hardly been used; it may even be placed too far away from the audience to be of real service. Only the immense openness of the acting area and the consequent feeling of the audience being in one room with the actors give the Mermaid a particular quality. The Arena Theatre has explored not only this greater empathy between actors and audience, but has also tried to discover a style of presentation and acting appropriate to the three-sided platform stage. In fact, of course, the Arena Theatre is not three-sided in a rectilinear sense, but is semi-circular; however, the style of production and the techniques of projection belong to this category. Little is heard of this theatre because it is outside London and has no permanent building. John

English has recently contributed to *New Theatre Magazine,* and one can perceive how carefully he has thought about this form of stage. But he seems to be striving to work towards an ideal theatre. We might end up with a monopoly of this "ideal"—but any monopoly of theatre form is likely to be limiting. Different forms of theatre, each with its own advantages, will give us a richer theatre. The Studio Theatre Company has experimented with a form of staging that most clearly demands a style of acting and presentation quite different from that of the orthodox theatre. Theatre-in-the-round demands an acting technique of its own. The company has insisted on staging many new plays, and inviting many different producers to exploit the central stage, so that it is difficult to identify the characteristics of theatre-in-the-round, apart from making allowances for inadequate premises, equipment and budget in general. Clearly it is not fair to judge any of these companies on their achievements so far, and it would be absurd to assume that they have achieved all that can be achieved from the different forms of open stage. It is permissible, though, to be excited about what they have achieved, and to conclude that there are great possibilities in the open end-stage, the three-sided platform stage and the central stage.

If the theatre is to remain, or rather to become once more, a significant element in our social life, there must clearly be a growth of university interest, an expansion of our accepted ideas of drama, and new buildings which can set off the drama to advantage. The activities of the Arts Council, and the Gulbenkian Foundation indicate that there may be some encouragement for experimental theatre work. John Neville made an appeal, in his address at the *Conference on the Architecture of New Theatres,* for a period of experiment and research. This is urgent, and the Universities could contribute immensely if they would escape from the traditional approach to theatre through literature, and if they would be prepared to look at theatre outside the West End and outside our own immediate times. A university contemplating building a theatre could do worse than build a sheltered space in which any form of stage and auditorium might easily be erected; it would be something like a television studio, equipped with an open grid-work ceiling, straight walls fitted with power outlets and so on. A flexible theatre is unlikely to provide real satisfaction in any form, would be expensive, and could hardly be built effectively while we are still ignorant of the possibilities of any form other than the proscenium stage. Absolute freedom to experiment should be the University's aim.

Meanwhile, in London and in towns where new theatres are needed, those of us who are aware of the wonderful possibilities of theatre, must try to influence the new patrons. New forms of theatre must be built.

Book Reviews

Antigone, by Anouilh. Translated by Lewis Galantière. (Methuen, 71 pages, 3/6d.)

Anouilh's Antigone was first performed in Paris in 1942 under the Occupation. In 1949 it was performed in England by the Old Vic Theatre Company in this translation which was then published in 1951.

This then is not a new translation. But there is an importance in its appearance in a cheap edition. The play was first done in English in New York, but the text was an adaptation, though also by Galantière. This adaptation was published by Samuel French, and has been the only acting text available. Now there is a choice of two cheap editions.

The amount of dialogue altered in the adaptation is small, but the changes are fundamental to the point of the play. The central alteration is as follows: On page 46 of the Methuen text Antigone is driven by Creon's description of the travesty of the burial ritual as practised by the priests to admit that she has no "reason" for burying her brother. She did it "For nobody. For myself." In the New York version she makes no such admission. The climactic line is instead: "No Creon. There is God and there are his priests, and they are not the same thing." The significant alterations are all directed to showing Antigone as, in some sense, a martyr. Galantière says, in the introduction to the adaptation, that without the context of the Occupation the play is weakened by the inadequacy of the principle for which Antigone dies.

The original text, then, involves a conflict between an individual and the government. This is not the conflict of Sophocles' play where the conflict is between two systems, between the claims of ritual and social order, i.e. ultimately between divine and human law. The adaptation should be thought of as an attempt to use Anouilh's structure to stage something approximately to the point of Sophocles' original. Since Anouilh has sanctioned the adaptation a producer today seems perfectly entitled to choose which conflict he wishes to shew. And I do not think that a producer has the right to stage this play unless he understands fully the difference between the two versions.

If we look at Sophocles we will see that, having made clear the principles for which Antigone dies, he also makes clear that she herself does not fully understand these principles. In neither of these points is the adaptation entirely satisfactory. First of all the nature of the principles is left obscure by the indiscrimate talk of God and the gods. We *must* not be left in doubt as to whether the Greek gods are to be thought of as symbols of divinity which we now describe differently, or as mere ornaments. But the adaptation also seems to be crudely explicit in some places, particularly in its additions to the Chorus. Secondly, in its anxiety to shew Antigone as a martyr it has watered down her character unnecessarily; it excludes some beautiful speeches.

A producer who wishes to present the point of the adaptation should certainly consult the direct translation, and perhaps adapt his text with reference to it. Because of this and because anyone who wishes to understand the play must realise that there are these two versions current which are, fundamentally, different, I commend the publication of this cheap edition.

LEO AYLEN

The Bad - tempered Man. (Menander's Dyskolos.) Translated by Philip Vellacott, (O.U.P., 50 pages, 10/6d.)

This book came too late for the last issue. The few remarks space allows me here must be taken as an appendage to what I said about Menander there.

In the case of a play like this the most important achievement of a translator is to convey a sense of style. In many places the text is conjectural and mere accuracy is not enough, though Mr. Vellacott does render the currently accepted version of the original accurately enough.

More important, he has given us a play that could be performed. The style shews the influence of Christopher Fry who has written the foreword. By using verse forms approximating to those of the original he has avoided the faults of the Arnott version. His translating the iambic trimeter into a six stress English line instead of blank verse is much more successful here than in his version of the Oresteia. As in Fry's writing the looser prosody is more appropriate to fantastic comedy than to the concentration of tragedy. I wonder if the dancing nature of the trochaic rhythms at the end can be adequately conveyed in English verse without rhymes at all. This doubt arises because the only comparable works in English are the sort of pastorals and masques that always do use rhyme. And this may explain why the final effect is perhaps closer to Mr. Fry's "charm" then to the "polish" of the original. Fry in the foreword mentions, wrongly I feel, "charm" as the keynote of Sheridan. But this book does Menander service. It is to be greatly commended.

LEO AYLEN

Four Plays by William Inge: Come Back, Little Sheba; Picnic; Bus Stop; The Dark at the Top of the Stairs. (Heinemann, 304 pages, 21s.)

In the crucial scene of *Picnic,* just before the heroine is borne off in the hero's muscular arms to perform the act of darkness, she is called upon to say, "*(With all the feeling she has)* Gee!" The inarticulate brevity of this utterance is typical of William Inge's characters, most of whom, like Gilbert's House of Peers, make no pretense to intellectual eminence or scholarship sublime. These four plays are therefore somewhat lacking in rhetorical and intellectual delights, though they also lack the pretentious argle-bargle that O'Neill and Mr. Odets have bequeathed to Mr. Williams and Mr. Miller. There is nothing in the least audacious or adventurous about these plays, which are naturalistically set in the American Midwest, among the thoroughly conventional lower middle classes. Mr. Inge sails squarely in the mainstream of American drama; almost devoid of idiosyncrasy, he provides exactly the sort of thing that American actors can act, American directors can direct, and American audiences can take. It is little wonder that all four of these plays were Broadway successes, and that all four have become Hollywood movies.

Within his self-chosen limits, Mr. Inge can work to admirable effect. His idiom, plain and unvarnished as it is, has its own ways of being pungent and expressive, as when the *patronne* of Grace's Diner, in *Bus Stop,* elucidates her views on the importance of a satisfactory sexual adjustment: "... I'm a restless sort of woman, and every once in a while, I gotta have me a man, just to keep m'self from gettin' grouchy." And the skill with which he interweaves relationships and plots, as well as the intrinsic interest of his subject matter (sex, for the most part, and loneli-

ness, and domestic discord) keep his plain people from ever becoming dull.

Come Back, Little Sheba and *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* are about ill-matched couples whose lives are littered with unfulfilled hopes. Each play is provided with an explosive crisis, which leads (not entirely convincingly) to a marital reconciliation, the moral in both cases being that, if we face up to realities and give one another love and understanding, everything will be all right. We read in *Come Back, Little Sheba,* " What's in the past can't be helped. You . . . you've got to forget it and live for the present. If you can't forget the past, you stay in it and never get out . . . We gotta keep on living, don't we ?" And in *The Dark,* " The people we love aren't always perfect, are they ? But if we love them, we have to take them as they are." Both plays are competently written and vividly characterized but both of them (especially *The Dark)* are a bit too pat, too easy—and too derivative and familiar. It's all been done before, and done better.

Picnic, be-laurelled with the Donaldson Award, the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award, and the Pulitzer Prize, is the epitome of the " dustbin drama ": the hero makes his entrance, says the stage direction, *" carrying a basket of trash."* In *Picnic,* Mr. Inge treats the subject of sexual attraction by focussing primarily on two young people whose sexual attractiveness is almost their only distinction. Hal, the trash-carrier, is *"An exceedingly handsome, husky youth. In a past era he would have been called a vagabond, but Hal today is usually referred to as a bum."* And " Madge is the pretty one," says her kid sister, " but she's so dumb they almost had to burn the schoolhouse down to get *her* out of it !" These two could be the *dramatis personae* of the American play to end all American plays, the definitive parody. But Mr. Inge knows what he is about. As Madge prepares to leave home and join her lover, her mother says, "He's no good. He'll never be able to support you. When he does have a job, he'll spend all his money on booze. After a while, there'll be other women." And Madge answers quietly, "I've thought of all those things." This is not simply love's young dream; Madge knows what she's getting into, but she also knows that she must go just the same. " Helen, could I stop her ?" says the mother to a neighbour; and the answer is " Could anyone have stopped you, Flo ?" The very simplicity of the characters helps to generate a sense of immemorial process, irresistable, inevitable, portentous, and attended by pain.

The subplot of *Picnic* (a rueful and sensitive variation on the man-hungry-old-maid theme) gives some evidence of Mr. Inge's comic talents, which are further exhibited in *Bus Stop,* in which he takes as his hero an exuberant and naive young cowboy, who, falling in love with a night-club singer, straight-forwardly abducts her with the aim of marrying her by force and living happily ever after. (" You just think you wouldn't like it now 'cause ya never been there and the whole idea's kinda strange. But you'll get over them feelin's. In no time at all yor gonna be happy as a murhen.") Not until he learns humility is he finally united with his Ozark inamorata, who is a splendid comic creation, so cheerfully simple that she and her cowboy were obviously meant for each other.

Mr. Inge says in his Foreword that *Bus Stop* is designed "as a composite picture of varying kinds of love." This would be a true description of any other play in this volume, especially *Picnic,* but in *Bus Stop* Mr. Inge develops to the fullest his technique of interweaving several con-

trasting relationships so that each strand sets off the others. The secondary characters include figures representing Unawakened Love, Depraved Love, and (if it is not a contradiction in terms) Casual Love. Depraved Love (a college professor who molests adolescent girls) is an embarrassing failure, because his affected, pseudo-literary idiom doesn't ring true even to his affectation, and because Mr. Inge is just not at ease with a complicated character. Nevertheless. *Bus Stop* is his best play, hilarious, warm, and wise. It suggests that perhaps William Inge is a major dramatist after all.

JULIUS NOVICK

Plays Recently Published

"EPIC STYLE", "ALIENATION", "the literisation of the theatre"—these and other terms used by Brecht are still cropping up with increasing regularity in the theatre today. But despite at least one good book on Brecht's life and work, people in this country still talk about his influence without possessing a clear and detailed knowledge of his plays. Productions in this country have been few and far between, and would not necessarily have met with Brecht's approval, while translations of his plays, let alone his theoretical *dicta,* have been difficult to come by. His work will always be the subject of controversy, but it is bound to be a vague and muddled controversy until his writings are more generally available in reliable translations. Methuens have taken the plunge and undertaken "to remedy matters by getting the best available translations of the chief plays, or if necessary having new ones made, and publishing them in a convenient form." The first volume **(Bertolt Brecht—Plays, Volume 1,** 345 pp. 25s.) contains *The Caucasian Chalk Circle, The Threepenny Opera, The Trial of Lucullus,* and *The Life of Galileo,* in translations by Tania and James Stern, Desmond I. Vesey, Eric Bentley and H. R. Hays; the verses in the *Chalk Circle* are translated by W. H. Auden. The texts used, we are told, are those of the latest German editions, often differing from the acting texts; for instance the new translation of *The Life of Galileo,* is from a text twice as long as the London stage version. All the plays in this edition are readable and don't *sound* like translations; as such they will be of more than passing interest to the reader not primarily concerned with theatrical practice, and valuable to actors, directors and dramatists whose views on their craft are not yet dogmatic. Even those who cannot swallow Brecht's didactic statements about politics and the drama will find his debunking of romantic notions inside and outside the theatre a necessary if disturbing corrective to their peace of mind. A second volume is promised, which will include *Mother Courage, The Good Women of Setzuan* and *St. Joan of the Stockyards.* When complete, this series will be of immense value.

Robert Bolt is a playwright who acknowledges his debt to Brecht and discusses it intelligently in the preface he has written to the published version of **A Man for all Seasons** (Heinemann, 99pp. 7s. 6d.) At a time when the writing of historical drama is almost universally frowned upon, Mr. Bolt has achieved the double distinction of writing an historical play which has succeeded in the West End and is genuinely moving to read. I suspect that this is because he uses history, not as an

excuse for dressing up his cast in "period" costume and his action in gay fantasy, but as a method of throwing an oblique but penetrating light upon problems which still have a meaning. Over a matter of principle, should one follow one's conscience, even to the point of death ? Or is it wiser to surrender to the inevitable ? This question is posed brilliantly in the adamant refusal of Sir Thomas More, the "man for all seasons", to swear to the Act of Succession recognizing Henry VIII's divorce. By refusing to admit that a man's beliefs should wilt under pressure from the society he lives in and enjoys, Robert Bolt provides an uncompromising answer which is salutary in an age when arguments in favour of "conformity" become increasingly subtle and difficult to reject. The play is all the more successful because Mr. Bolt knows how to use the theatre. Action and argument proceed hand in hand, and the tense restraint of the language gives more opportunity to an actor than any amount of the frenzied hysteria which a dramatist of lesser stature would have felt bound to insert. Those who don't expect to see the play in London will find this published version worth reading, and I recommend the preface to those who are already acquainted with the play.

In **Miss Julie and other plays,** adapted into English by Max Faber (Heinemann, 145pp. 9s. 6d.) we have four examples (the other three are *Creditors, The Ghost Sonata* and *The Stronger,)* written in Sweden at the turn of the century, of the neurotic genius of Strindberg. In their own day these plays, questioning human relationships and exploring the guilt and emptiness which Strindberg saw at the core of the human soul, were revolutionary; and even now their impact is no less electrifying. *Miss Julie* and *Creditors* are searing plays about the destructive power of sexual relationships : *The Ghost Sonata,* with its house full of dummies petrified by their own guilt, the mistress of the house who lives in a cupboard and caws like a parrot, and the loathsome vampire cook, is the forerunner of Beckett and Pinter. A brief introduction by John Allen sketches in the historical and literary background to the plays.

Nothing could differ more from Strindberg's tortured world than the Oriental settings and exotic splendour of **Five Heroic Plays,** edited by Bonamy Dobrée (Oxford University Press, 417pp. 8s. 6d.) The edition contains *The Tragedy of Mustapha, The Empress of Morocco, The Destruction of Jerusalem — Part II, Sophonisba* and *Aureng-Zebe,* plays written in rhyming heroic couplets which carry us into a mythical world of magnificent heroes, driven to deeds of matchless virtue by the twin emotions of Love and Valour, of queens of unsullied beauty and villains of unrivalled depravity. This attractive and well-turned out edition (one assumes that the misprints have been meticulously copied from the original texts) provides a useful introduction to what is perhaps the most astonishing phenomenon in the history of the English stage. In a lively and sympathetic introduction, Professor Dobrée exhorts us to accept and enjoy the absurdities and impossibly heightened emotions of the Heroic Play for what they are — an exuberant exploitation of a Baroque art form which for some time, with Dryden as its chief exponent, captivated the courtly Restoration audiences. MICHAEL ANDERSON

"Jacobean Theatre", (Arnold, 247pp. 25s.) will be reviewed in the next issue of "New Theatre Magazine".

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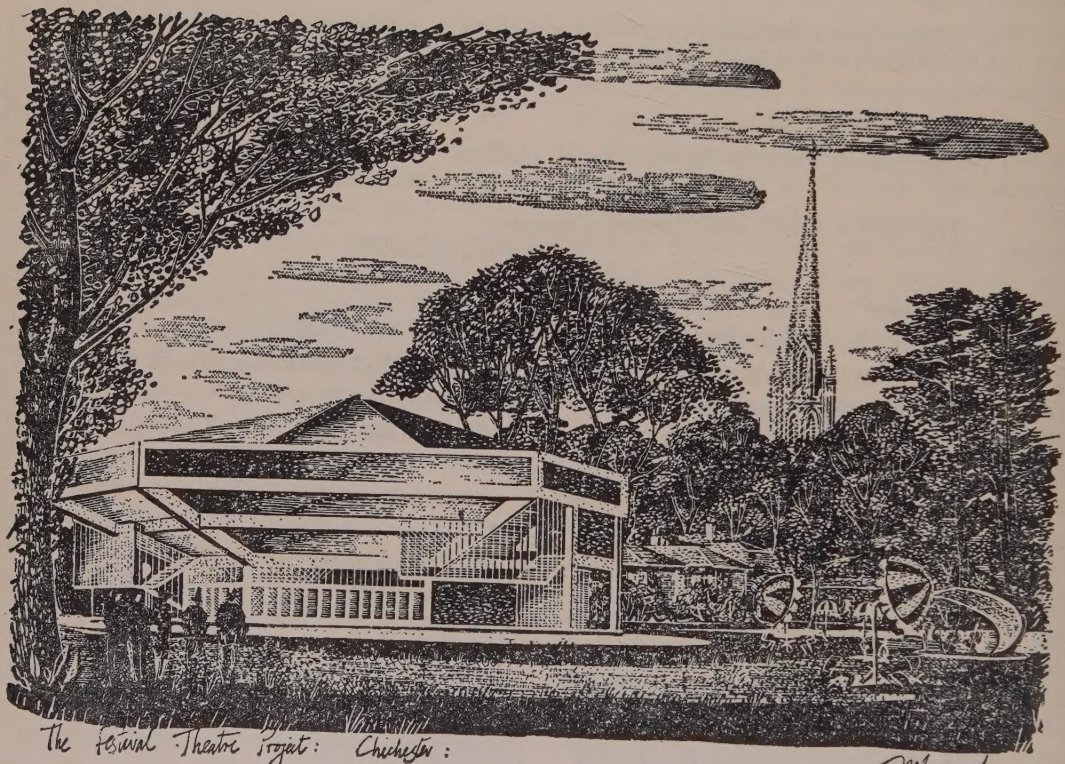

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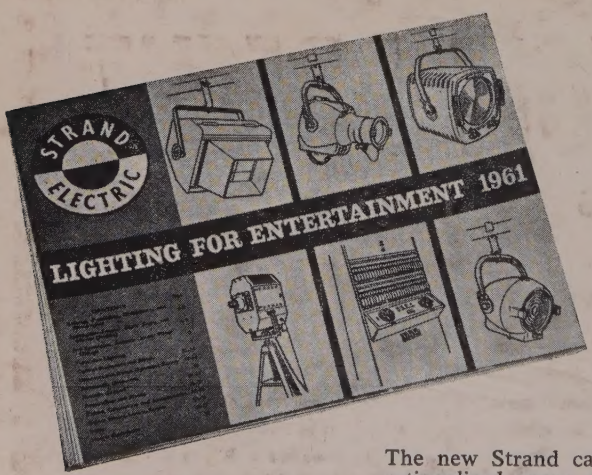

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